

Transactions

APRIL/MAY 2003

TRANSPORTATION NEWS
FOR THE NINE-COUNTY
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



Public Involvement: How Are We Doing?



CHRISTOPHER SPRINGMANN

MTC has begun the process of updating its federal Public Involvement Procedures, and is seeking comment on the draft document. The procedures are built on a series of guiding principles. Key among these is the notion that “one size does not fit all” — meaning that to be effective, public participation must be tailored to fit the audience and the issue.

Has MTC done a good job of keeping in touch with you or your organization? Have we clearly explained our decision-making processes and the issues at hand? Do our communication vehicles — our newsletter, Web site, public meetings and the like — keep you informed?

You can let us know at a public hearing set for Friday, June 13, 2003 (see calendar to right for details). Written comments will be accepted until 4 p.m. on Friday, July 11, 2003, and can be addressed to:

MTC Public Information Office
MetroCenter, 101 Eighth Street
Oakland, CA 94607
Fax: 510.464.7848
E-mail: info@mtc.ca.gov

For more information or for a copy of the Proposed Revisions to the Public Involvement Procedures, call 510.464.7787, or visit MTC's Web site: www.mtc.ca.gov.

The draft procedures were developed under the guidance of the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, which underscores the need for public involvement, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987. The procedures also respond to federal statutes enacted in the 1990s relating to environmental justice, the idea being to minimize adverse health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations; facilitate participation by affected communities in the decision-making process; and ensure that minority populations and low-income communities share equitably in the distribution of transportation benefits.



JOHN BLAUSTEN

Freeway Service Patrol tow drivers Jessie Galicia, Larry Miller and Louis Ray pose with tools of their trade.

Tow Truck Service Crosses Historic Milestone

“ANGELS” UNCLOG FREEWAYS AND RESCUE STRANDED MOTORISTS

On a Monday morning this spring, the gleaming white tow trucks operated by the Freeway Service Patrol (FSP) stopped to rescue stranded motorists, clear accidents, tag abandoned vehicles and pick dangerous debris off Bay Area freeways 244 times. In so doing, the region's “guardian angels” — as the fleet's crew of 140 specially trained drivers have been called — crossed a historic milestone: their millionth assist.

The tow trucks deal with the accidents, stalls and other incidents that cause up to 50 percent of freeway congestion.

They also can be a driver's best friend. “Yesterday, my car blew a tire right smack in the middle of commute traffic,” wrote one commuter recently. “As my car came to a stop, zillions of cars whizzed by and I felt like a sitting duck. Lo and behold, a tow truck pulled up behind me and guided me

back into a safer spot. He was a gift from heaven.”

MTC's Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE) administers and operates the FSP in partnership with Caltrans and the California Highway Patrol (CHP).

FSP drivers provide basic services such as changing a tire free of charge. If they can't get stalled vehicles running within a few minutes, they tow them off the freeway — at no charge to the vehicle's

owner — to the nearest safe location identified by the CHP.

In the 10-plus years of its existence, the FSP has grown from a single, three-truck beat in the Interstate 680/Highway 24 interchange area to a network that today includes 33 service beats, 74 rescue vehicles (primarily tow trucks, but also flatbed and pick-up trucks) and some 450 miles of coverage all around the region.

— Réka Goode

Transportation Summit: Get Involved

Panels

Finding the Right Balance

Prominent local business, environmental, social justice and government leaders will address a series of urgent questions facing planners:

- How can we link transportation and land-use decisions to support “smart growth”?
- Should we honor prior funding commitments, or start with a clean slate?
- How much should the plan focus on overall policies vs. specific projects?

Considering the National Perspective

Transportation policy experts will offer their perspectives on the pending reauthorization of the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century and the challenges and opportunities for the Bay Area.

Panelists:

- **Martin Wachs**, Moderator
Director, UC Berkeley's Institute of Transportation Studies
- **Anne Canby**, president, Surface Transportation Policy Project
- **Robert Poole Jr.**, director of Transportation Studies and founder, Reason Foundation
- **Jeff Squires**, senior policy advisor, U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee



getting from here to there

You are invited to a free conference to kick off the process to develop the next edition of MTC's long-term transportation plan.

**Saturday, June 14, 2003
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Registration begins at 8 a.m.

**Palace Hotel
2 New Montgomery Street
San Francisco**

Located adjacent to the BART and Muni Metro Montgomery Street station

Hear thought-provoking panels with local and national experts, participate in group discussions, express your ideas throughout the day using electronic voting right at your seat, and join us for lunch!

Register at www.mtc.ca.gov
by June 10, 2003,
or call 510.464.7841.

Conference cosponsors include:

- AC Transit
- Alameda County Congestion Management Agency
- Association of Bay Area Governments
- BART
- Bay Area Air Quality Management District
- Caltrain (Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board)
- Caltrans
- City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County
- City and County of San Francisco
- City of Oakland
- City of San Jose
- City of Vallejo
- Contra Costa County Airports
- Contra Costa Transportation Authority
- County Connection (Central Contra Costa Transit Authority)
- Marin County Congestion Management Agency
- Napa County Transportation Planning Agency
- RIDES for Bay Area Commuters, Inc.
- SamTrans
- San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority
- San Francisco County Transportation Authority
- San Francisco Municipal Railway (Muni)
- San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
- Solano Transportation Authority
- Sonoma County Transportation Authority
- Tri Delta Transit (Eastern Contra Costa Transit Authority)
- Vallejo Transit
- WHEELS (Livermore/Amador Valley Transit Authority)

Calendar

WEDNESDAY

JUNE 11, 2003

9:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Administration Committee*

10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Bay Area Toll Authority
Oversight Committee*

10:15 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium

Public Hearing*

Programming of Federal Funding
(see description below)

10:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Programming and Allocations Committee*

12:30 pm

MetroCenter, 3rd Floor Conference Room
MTC Advisory Council

FRIDAY

JUNE 13, 2003

9:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Planning and Operations Committee*

10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Service Authority for Freeways and
Expressways Operations Committee*

10:15 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium

Public Hearing*

Proposed Revisions to MTC's
Public Involvement Procedures
(see description to left)

10:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Legislation Committee*

SATURDAY

JUNE 14, 2003

9 am–2 pm

Palace Hotel, 2 New Montgomery Street
San Francisco

Transportation 2030: Getting From
Here to There* (see adjacent ad)

MONDAY

JUNE 16, 2003

1:30 pm

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Partnership Technical Advisory Committee

FRIDAY

JUNE 20, 2003

1:30 pm

MetroCenter, Room 171
Regional Agency Coordinating Committee

WEDNESDAY

JUNE 25, 2003

10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Bay Area Toll Authority*

10:05 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Service Authority for Freeways
and Expressways*

10:10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Metropolitan Transportation Commission*

1 pm

MetroCenter, ABAG Offices
Metropolitan Transportation Commission/
Association of Bay Area Governments
Task Force

THURSDAY

JUNE 26, 2003

3:30 pm

MetroCenter, 3rd Floor Conference Room
Minority Citizens Advisory Committee

FRIDAY

JUNE 27, 2003

9:30 am

MetroCenter, Room 171
Regional Airport Planning Committee

Public Hearing*

Programming of Federal Funding
Wednesday, June 11, 2003
(see above for time and place)

The public is invited to comment on the proposed distribution plan for \$256 million in flexible federal funding anticipated to flow to the region in 2003–04 and 2004–05; this programming action covers the first two years of money from the pending reauthorization of the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21). Comment also is being solicited on an accompanying amendment to the 2003 Transportation Improvement Program. For instructions on commenting in writing and to view the expenditure plan, visit www.mtc.ca.gov.

* Webcast on www.mtc.ca.gov

Note: Dates, times and locations of MTC meetings may change. Please confirm by calling 510.464.7787. Agendas, updated meeting schedules and packets for MTC standing committees are posted on MTC's Web site: www.mtc.ca.gov.

Voters May Be Asked to Raise Tolls for Transit

Is a \$3 bridge toll an idea whose time has come? In the eyes of state Sen. Don Perata (D-Oakland), the answer is a resounding “yes.” At an April press conference, Perata unveiled details about his Senate Bill 916, which calls for increasing tolls on seven state-owned toll bridges in the Bay Area from the current \$2 to \$3 to fund expansion of the region’s public transit network. If the bill makes it through the Legislature and past the governor’s desk, the toll hike and expenditure plan would go before Bay Area voters in the March 2004 elections. The seven-county measure would need a majority vote.

“My bill requires that the funds from the proposed toll go only to projects that will reduce traffic crossing bridges and their approaches,” said Perata.

MTC has been working closely with Perata’s staff on an expendi-

Key Projects

Proposed to Be Funded With \$1 Toll Hike

Figures in millions of dollars

\$150	Replacement of San Francisco's Transbay Terminal	\$65	Enhanced AC Transit bus service
\$143	Seismic strengthening of BART's transbay tube	\$65	Tri-Valley Rapid Transit Corridor improvements
\$135	Commuter rail over Dumbarton rail bridge	\$45	BART extension to Warm Springs in South Bay
\$100	Improvements to Interstate 80/ Interstate 680 interchange	\$42	Installation, integration and operation of TransLink® smart card fare system
\$96	Rail extension to East Contra Costa County (e-BART)	\$30	BART connector to Oakland International Airport
\$79	New and expanded ferry service with additional berthing in San Francisco	\$22	Enhanced transbay express bus service

Project Update

Fish-Friendly Bridge Project Forges Ahead

Construction crews are nearing the end of the first phase of foundation work for the new Benicia-Martinez Bridge. By July, they will have driven approximately 100 eight-foot-diameter steel piles — each up to 164 feet in length — deep into the waters and bedrock of the Carquinez Strait. The next step will be to drill deeper still, through the hollow center of the piles, anchoring the foundations as much as 300 feet below the surface of the water.

The crews are playing catch-up, having been idle for several months last winter while state and federal environmental resource agencies, Caltrans and MTC — in its role as the Bay Area Toll Authority — looked for a way to protect fish in

the strait from lethal sound waves caused by the pile-driving.

In early February, the go-ahead was given to use an ingenious “bubble curtain,” generated by large air compressors, to dissipate the noise and damaging shock waves. Several weeks of testing showed that the Jacuzzi-like bubble shield was working as hoped.

The delay and extra expense incurred in solving the environmental problem as well as other

unexpected factors — including difficult site conditions and design modifications for the bridge’s superstructure — could raise the price tag by \$250 million, bringing the total estimate to over \$900 million.

Rod McMillan, MTC’s manager of Bridge and Highway Operations, noted that the escalated costs could be paid for in part out of contingency funds in the toll bridge program. Funding also could come from reconfiguring other bridge projects



Crews are logging long hours driving piles for the new Benicia-Martinez Bridge.

ture plan for the approximately \$125 million to be generated annually by the \$1 toll hike, and in April acted to support the bill with amendments. The plan is the product of a six-month fact-finding, analysis and consensus-building process that involved the nine county congestion management agencies, the region’s seven largest public transit operators, the Bay Area Water Transit Authority, Caltrans, and stakeholders representing business, environment and social equity interests.

The expenditure plan lists \$1.4 billion worth of rail extensions, new bus and ferry lines, and the like (see box). The list includes several critical capital projects that have languished for years due to lack of funding, including seismic strengthening of BART’s transbay tube.

Recognizing that the region cannot add capacity to its transit systems without providing new

funds for maintenance, fuel and the like, SB 916 also sets aside up to \$48 million per year from the toll hike as operating revenue.

In addition, the plan invests in new technology that promises to make riding transit more convenient. Falling into this category is a \$42 million earmark for the TransLink® “smart card” fare payment system, which six transit agencies have been testing. The infusion of cash would help MTC install the system regionwide, enabling riders to use one card for all their bus, rail and ferry trips.

“Considering that the Golden Gate Bridge already charges a \$5 toll, a \$3 toll on the other bridges would be a relative bargain, especially when you consider that the revenue would go directly to a number of critical mass transit projects that otherwise would be stalled,” said Randy Rentschler, MTC’s manager of Legislation and Public Affairs. — Brenda Kahn

Commission Actions

MARCH/APRIL 2003

- Authorized \$8.1 million for the purchase of equipment and smart cards in preparation for the first wave of regionwide implementation of the TransLink® fare collection system.
- Gave the green light to the Transportation/Land Use Initiative developed by MTC and the nine Bay Area county congestion management agencies (CMAs), and set aside up to \$1.35 million in planning grants for the CMAs for fiscal year 2003–04 to finance this work.
- Adopted priorities for spending up to \$1.8 million flowing to the region in fiscal year 2003–04 from the federal Elderly and Persons With Disabilities Program. (MTC Resolution 3540)
- Acted to support a variety of bills pending in Sacramento, including Senate Bill 541 (Torlakson), which calls for indexing the state’s gas tax for inflation; and Senate Bill 367 (Sher) and Assembly Bill 1409 (Wolk), both of which would delete a provision in current law that prohibits folding bike racks on 45-foot commuter buses.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION WWW.MTC.CA.GOV

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APRIL/MAY 2003

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